

Washington Post  
Interview with Donald Trump  
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Donald Trump: I want to say the book would be much better if it's a positive book instead of a negative book. The negative books are not working against me. It's been very interesting. I love it. By the way, the *New York Times* is reeling right now because of that article they wrote about me on Sunday. Every one of the women has now come up against, except for Barbara Res. Ungrateful woman. And we've got 15 emails. I don't know if you want them, if you want to write it. But Barbara Res, that was the one, the construction woman that I hired.

Michael Kranish: Yeah, I know who she is.

Donald Trump: Well, I gave her a job that no other person would have given her because it was a long time ago and women were not in-charge of construction projects. But I took the chance and I put her in-charge of the job. I've got many emails from her thanking me and wanting a new job.

Michael Kranish: Well, first of all, with your permission, I'm going to record this as I mentioned. And I'm going to let the *New York Times* deal with its own story.

Donald Trump: I thought you might want that. Okay, let's get going then.

Michael Kranish: Yeah, in fairness to them. I mean, they did their reporting. What we want to do obviously with the book, we want to --

Donald Trump: They're doing a lot on it because they were duped, and they looked like they were duped to everyone. The women all stepped forward and said it was a joke. Okay, let's go. Mr. O'Donnell, right?

Michael Kranish: Before I get to Mr. O'Donnell, I may want to set the stage. This sort of serves a dual purpose, Mr. Trump, and that is for the book and for a story that would be in the very near future for this paper, and that is setting the stage to how this came to be, that Mr. O'Donnell, he became president of Trump Plaza Hotel and Casino. But before that, now that I've spent several months along with Marc researching your life, reading a lot of what's been written about it, it seems to me one of the most important moments is that moment when you learned that three of your top executives had died in a helicopter crash.

Donald Trump: Absolutely right.

Michael Kranish: So before I get to Mr. O'Donnell whose role obviously increased after that tragic circumstance, can you just give me a little bit of sense about how well you knew these three gentlemen - Mr. Hyde, and Mr. Etess, and Mr. Benanav, if I'm pronouncing the third one correctly.

Donald Trump: I knew them very well. They were great executives. Steve Hyde was a fantastic person. They were friends of mine. They were doing a phenomenal job. Steve Hyde headed up things. Mark Etess, likewise a great executive, a great guy. The three of them, these were phenomenal people and really good executives, and they died in a helicopter crash. They died unbelievably in a helicopter crash. It was a tough time because I really liked these guys. They were incredible.

Steve Hyde was a Mormon. Steve Hyde would give a big percentage of his salary, every month he would give a big percentage of his salary to the Mormon Church, which I always respected a lot. But anyway, they died in a helicopter crash and that was a terrible thing. We were doing great. As I told you, I did great in Atlantic City because I was there early. I was making a lot of money with Atlantic City. They were great. They were running things. They were doing a phenomenal job, and in one fell swoop they died.

Michael Kranish: Can you just take me through that day? They came to New York to go to a press conference with you about a boxing match. Is that correct?

Donald Trump: About a boxing match and --

Michael Kranish: Where was that press conference, Mr. Trump?

Donald Trump: I believe it was at The Plaza Hotel.

Michael Kranish: The one in New York?

Donald Trump: Yeah. And they came up and they were going back. And they were just amazing, just amazing.

Michael Kranish: Did they meet with you also at Trump Tower or did you see them off at --

Donald Trump: They came over at Trump Tower. And I don't want to go into it, about me potentially being on that helicopter because people are going to say -- so I don't really want to get into it. But it was just one of those things.

Michael Kranish: I just want to accurately reconstruct it in the book because it is one of those dramatic narratives where -- I can't think of another other than your brother dying. It seems like one of the more dramatic emotional impacts.

Donald Trump: It was dramatic not only from a financial standpoint because from a financial standpoint, it wasn't that. They were three guys that I really liked a lot. I built that whole thing and Steve was doing a phenomenal job with it. They're just, in my business. My business is so intense, you really become friends with the people that are involved. It was doing really, really well, and they died. It was a terrible situation.

Michael Kranish: As I understand it, and I talked with one of your associates, you were in your -- first of all, just to be clear, I may have spoken over what you mentioned. You saw them

obviously at the Trump Plaza Hotel in the press conference. Did you all come back to the Trump Tower?

Donald Trump: I came back and then they came back later.

Michael Kranish: They came back later and then they got --

Donald Trump: I'll never forget. I'll give you -- so what happened, I mean it's been a long time, but what happened -- because I might not have even gotten into that detail in the book. But they called for a helicopter. They go back to Atlantic City and they sent a helicopter, but it was a helicopter without a good record. They didn't like it and they called to get one that they liked better. It was an Agusta which was, you know, I won't fly in an Agusta. I will not fly in an Agusta helicopter because of the way they treated the families and everything else.

But anyway, so they had a helicopter. It didn't have the greatest record. So rather than going, they waited for another helicopter which was sent. This was from a company. It wasn't my helicopter, it was from a company. So they waited for another helicopter. It actually delayed them. They got on the Agusta and that one went down.

Michael Kranish: How did you learn about that? Norma came in and told you?

Donald Trump: Well, I was actually called by the state troopers of New Jersey because it went down right next to the

Garden State Parkway. One of the state troopers called me directly through Norma. You know what I mean. Called --

Michael Kranish: Through Norma, yeah.

Donald Trump: But I got on the phone and said we have five people, meaning the pilots who I didn't know because it was a rental company. But two pilots and the three people, the three executives. So it was a terrible thing.

Michael Kranish: Do you still think about that day often?

Donald Trump: I knew Steve's wife and I knew Mark's wife who were terrific women, and it was just a terrible situation. So what am I going to do?

Michael Kranish: Did they learn from you that their husbands had perished or were they told by somebody else first?

Donald Trump: I called them.

Michael Kranish: That was the first they knew?

Donald Trump: That was the first.

Michael Kranish: That must have been very difficult for you.

Donald Trump: Difficult? Yeah, difficult. I never did a thing like that before. Now I know how the people go and when they inform the soldiers' families that they're gone. It's a very tough thing to do. I mean, the response was like horrible.

Michael Kranish: What was the response?

Donald Trump: I want to just grab this one. Is that okay?  
I'm going to call you right back. Okay?

Michael Kranish: I'm not at my office number so you have  
to have your assistant call my cell phone.

Donald Trump: Hold on a second. Just hold on.

Michael Kranish: I'll hold on. [Long pause while Donald  
Trump takes a call 07:50-09:26]

Donald Trump: I'm sorry to keep you waiting that long.

Michael Kranish: As long as we can finish up, that's no  
problem at all.

Donald Trump: Just briefly, it was a very traumatic  
experience. They were great, great people. Can you imagine  
though they had one helicopter and they sent it away? I mean  
just bad stuff. Amazingly, they didn't make it down there, and  
that was a terrible thing. And calling their wives, I want to  
tell you that's not a call you want to make often because they  
had great relationships, both of them. The third was not  
married but getting married, going to get married in four or  
five months, Benanav. He was a great young guy. He was younger  
than the other two. A great young guy.

Anyway, only because he was the only one standing, I put  
Jack O'Donnell there. He was a third-rate executive. He didn't  
do a good job. Nobody liked him, and ultimately I got rid of  
him. Then he wrote a book and he was nasty in the book. It's

just unbelievable. But I put him there. I was told it wouldn't be good, people told me. But in all fairness, I had my upper management wiped out. I put him there and he was a third-rate executive. Nobody respected him. They didn't like him. I didn't.

By the way, I dealt with him very little, just so you understand. I mean I dealt with him very, very little. I didn't know him well. I could barely tell you what he looked like. But he turned out to be a third-rate executive. He didn't do well. The sad part is I was comparing him against Steve Hyde who was a great executive, like day and night. Like day and night, and so I got rid of him. So he writes a book and he said negative things about me in the book. What am I going to do?

Michael Kranish: In the book, he doesn't describe it as being fired. He describes it as him quitting.

Donald Trump: No, he didn't quit. I fired him. Why would he quit? I fired him. Now I will tell you something. He wasn't surprised. He knew he couldn't have done the position. He didn't have the ability to do the position, but I really had no choice because I didn't want to go out. He was there. It was a traumatic experience for Atlantic City, beyond me. It was a very traumatic experience for Atlantic City. It was very tough on the employees. I thought it would be better because in



a form he was there and it just didn't -- it's too bad. Life sometimes it doesn't work out. It didn't work out. But he turned out to be a third-rate executive.

Michael Kranish: So he was already the president of the -- when this happened, when the helicopter crash happened, he was at that time the president of The Trump Plaza Hotel and Casino. So you'd already given him a top position even before the crash.

Donald Trump: He was just a cog. The people that ran it were Steve Hyde, Mark Etess, the group. They were the ones. And perhaps he was okay when they were over him. But when he became the boss, he was terrible.

Michael Kranish: Have you read his book?

Donald Trump: No, I have not.

Michael Kranish: You have not. So I saw --

Donald Trump: I heard it was nasty, but I don't like to read nasty books about me, especially by disgruntled employees.

Michael Kranish: I think he would acknowledge that he's disgruntled because he has some very critical things to say. So by the definition of disgruntled, you know --

Donald Trump: He's a disgruntled former employee. I put him there only because it was the convenient thing to do. He did a lousy job. I didn't like him personally and I didn't like him as an executive. I didn't know him well. I made a lot of money in Atlantic City. It was a good experience. As you know,

Atlantic City was a great experience for me as we discussed. But he was not -- he was put there and I don't feel -- in a sense it was under the circumstances with the three people that were lost, these three great people. It turned out to be something that if I have to do it again, I wouldn't have. But I don't like having people where you put them in a position, you give them a shot at something, he didn't do well, and then he writes a book. So he takes my money and then he writes a book. When you take somebody's money, you don't write books about it.

Michael Kranish: Mr. Trump, I got a lot of questions so forgive me if I'm interrupting you. But was he the reason that you instituted your nondisclosure policy?

Donald Trump: I think he actually -- I have to check. But I think he actually had. I can check it. No, it wasn't.

Michael Kranish: He was not covered under a nondisclosure. He believes that he was the reason you started that policy. Is that correct?

Donald Trump: I believe he may have signed one. In fact, we're looking to see if he signed one.

Michael Kranish: He says he has not and that your policy of nondisclosure --

Donald Trump: You're telling me I better check because I believe he signed a nondisclosure.

Michael Kranish: Well, he wrote a book 25 years ago. I presumed that you would have checked before now.

Donald Trump: I didn't care. I didn't read the book.

Michael Kranish: Yeah. But what I'm asking you is after that experience --

Donald Trump: The book was a total failure. Frankly, the *Washington Post* is much more important to me than the book. That's why I'm talking to you right now.

Michael Kranish: Well, I appreciate that. The reason he is something that we're obviously going to write about is that there's only a very small number of your former top aides who have come out that critically. He wrote a whole book about it. There's just not other than maybe a couple of other examples, that's pretty unusual.

Donald Trump: He got fired. He did a poor job. He's a disgruntled employee. I had Barbara Res. If you look at the emails -- maybe I'll send them to you anyway. I will.

Michael Kranish: I understand about Barbara Res. One of my reporter colleagues has interviewed Barbara Res separately.

Donald Trump: Okay, I'm going to send them. You give them to him. Hey, Meredith, pick up on 1 please. I want you to give them. Would you give it to the one that's dealing with Barbara Ross. It's the same kind of a thing.

Michael Kranish: Sure.

Donald Trump: Expect in her case, she was sending me emails begging for her job back. Begging.

Michael Kranish: Okay. My part is I'm not writing about Barbara Res so I just want to make sure --

Donald Trump: So you've got to give it to your other reporter, all of it.

Michael Kranish: I will definitely. If you want to send me something --

Donald Trump: Are you on the phone, Meredith?

Meredith: Yes, I'm here.

Donald Trump: Where do we send these emails, please?

Michael Kranish: You could send them to my email address which is michael.k-r-a-n as in nickel, i, s as in Sam, H@washpost.com. w-a-s-h-p-o-s-t.com.

Meredith: Okay. Your last name, Michael?

Donald Trump: When your other reporter --

Meredith: Michael, what was your last name?

Michael Kranish: K-r-a-n as in nickel, i, s as Sam, h. So it's michael.kranish@washpost.com.

Meredith: Okay.

Donald Trump: Send that.

Michael Kranish: Thank you, Meredith.

Donald Trump: Let me see what you're sending, Meredith. I'll approve it. Go ahead, Michael. I need to get out of here.

Michael Kranish: All right. I get it. I need to ask you a few more questions though.

Donald Trump: Let your guy follow up to see. And Jack, whatever his name was, was no different other than he didn't send emails. Jack O'Donnell got fired. Jack O'Donnell was a third-rate executive. Jack O'Donnell, for whatever reason, didn't do a good job. I didn't like him. I didn't like him for the job he did. I didn't know him well, but I didn't like him for the job he did.

Michael Kranish: Let me ask you my -- before you go I need to make --

Donald Trump: A lot of people that worked at the place didn't like him either.

Michael Kranish: Let me ask you my quickest questions that I can so you don't leave without my asking them. In the book and in an interview, he says that your lawyer, Joseph Fusco, came to him and basically says Donald Trump doesn't want this book written...

Donald Trump: I told you, I think Jack is a lightweight. I call him the lightweight. I think this lightweight has a nondisclosure, too, by the way. If we find it, great. If we don't find it, good. How many years ago are we talking about?

Michael Kranish: It's 25 years ago.

Donald Trump: And why aren't you guys writing about all the successful jobs I have, like [indiscernible], railroad yards, like Trump Tower, like all of these jobs that are there? Why don't you write about successful jobs? Atlantic City was successful. You're always writing about a Jack O'Donnell who's a lightweight.

Michael Kranish: Just in fairness, I mean in the book, that's the reason a biography is done is that it's the full story. In today's *Post*, for example, there's a story by three reporters about how your business has done well since you've declared your candidacy.

Donald Trump: Do you have the story in today? I haven't seen it.

Michael Kranish: That's in today's paper. Check it out. There's a story about how because of your personal financial disclosure form --

Donald Trump: I've been doing well for many years. I mean, you don't know, but that's okay.

Michael Kranish: Well, but the point of the story is that --

Donald Trump: Let me get over this guy. Let me just give you a final statement because I do have to run a company and a campaign.

Michael Kranish: Okay. I need to ask you one other question, but go ahead if you'll just let me ask one other --

Donald Trump: I'm ambidextrous. I'm running a company and I'm running a campaign. I'm giving more and more of the company over to the executives to run and my kids. But I still am doing both, so I can't talk. I don't like to talk about guys that you hardly know. He's a total lightweight, this guy.

Michael Kranish: But in fairness, you did say in *Playboy Magazine* that most of what he wrote is, quote, probably true, unquote. Your words. So now you're saying --

Donald Trump: What did I say? Wait, wait. Most of what?

Michael Kranish: You said in a *Playboy* interview in 1997 that most of what he wrote is, quote, probably true, unquote. Those are your words.

Donald Trump: I didn't read his book. I mean I don't know what I'm referring to. Well, I've said it -- oh, I see, I've said it sarcastically. That is true. I probably said something sarcastic. It was probably true. I said who cares. I said who cares what he wrote in the book.

Michael Kranish: One of the questions. He did show me a letter that was written on Trump Castle stationary which basically said, "Watch your back. Donald is coming after you. He's concerned that you have a photo of Donald and Marla that

will mess up the Ivana divorce negotiations." It was a handwritten --

Donald Trump: I'm sure he made that letter up himself for you to see. I couldn't have cared less. I couldn't have cared less. I'm sure he made it up himself. This is a bad guy. He'll accept your check. When he loses, he tries to make money with a book. By the way, his book was a total failure.

Michael Kranish: Right. I hear what you're saying. But if you haven't read it, that doesn't mean you know whether it's full of accuracies or not.

Donald Trump: The thing in the *Washington Post*, I said -- I mean to the *Playboy*, I said, who cares? It's probably true. Who cares? I never saw the book. I don't think I've ever even seen the book, but I heard it was a negative book with a negative point that failed.

Michael Kranish: And you said in that interview you had only met him two or three times. He told me he's met with you hundreds of times, which is close to --

Donald Trump: Oh, no. I didn't know him. I knew him as an executive. I didn't know him. And ultimately I fired him.

Michael Kranish: And last question is --

Donald Trump: [Cross-talking] somebody else in.

Michael Kranish: Yeah. I wish we're doing this in person. It's kind of tough on the phone. I think you'll agree.



Donald Trump: But I have to go. Let's go, really. Yes, I understand. As what I said, he was a third-rate employee. He did a lousy job. People did not like him in the building. He was a horrible leader. He had zero leadership skills. And I got rid of him, period. Now I find out he writes -- and then I found out he wrote a book. The book was a total failure. The only reason we're even talking about the book now is I respect the *Washington Post*.

Michael Kranish: I appreciate it. In the book he does say that there was a scene with your brother, Robert, in which he was also involved in the business down there who basically stormed out and quit when you had some kind of a tirade, according to Mr. O'Donnell. And I did see it --

Donald Trump: That's wrong. Robert and I have a great relationship. We're very close. He never quit. Robert and I have a great relationship. Robert was involved with the casinos for a while. He worked with me, and worked for me, and worked with me, and he did a really good job. I have a fantastic relationship with my brother. He never quit. Nothing. We always have had a fantastic -- and to this day we have a fantastic relationship.

Michael Kranish: I'm sure you do. It is described in the book in detail and there were newspaper stories at the time saying that he had quit.

Donald Trump: Look, you don't understand. The book is total fiction if he said that because it's totally false. It never happened. If it did happen, I wouldn't have a great -- I have a great relationship with my brother.

Michael Kranish: I know you got to go so these are my last few request before I rush here. It would be great to talk to Mr. Fusco if he's sort of released from whatever obligation he has, and also your brother since he was there in some of the scenes that are described in the book. Hope had said if I have requests --

Donald Trump: I don't mind. Look, look, look, look, look. Here's what I know and want to tell you. This guy's a -- he's a loser. And I don't want to devote a lot of time to calling all sorts of people to talk to you about a story where you're going to be writing stuff that's all a lie, that he made up. He made it up to try and sensationalize it because it's about Donald Trump. He was a bad executive. I fired him, period.

I'm not looking to call Joe Fusco. Fusco actually is his name. He's a wonderful lawyer and a wonderful guy. I haven't seen him in years. I could trace him down and have him do it. I could call up my brother who I speak to all the time. But I don't want to waste a lot of time in this thing. Does that make sense to you?

I don't want to waste a lot of time so that you put in half a quote from me, big deal. You write a lousy [unintelligible] because you believe a lie. You believe this guy's lies. You believe a book that failed. Why didn't you write about the book 20 years ago? It's ancient history. Write about good things. I know it's the *Washington Post* and I know that --

Michael Kranish: I had mentioned there was a story today. But the reason I say this is because Hope Hicks said, "Look, if there are people that you think you should talk to that would be supportive of Mr. Trump, then you should ask for that." So I'm just trying to follow up and do that.

Donald Trump: Fine. Fine. You don't know how [unintelligible] I am. I've got 150 calls right now.

Michael Kranish: Right, I know you do.

Donald Trump: And I literally mean it. Hope Hicks can't even talk to people because they're calling her every five minutes. I'm talking to you for a long time --

Michael Kranish: I appreciate it.

Donald Trump: -- about a guy who I fired many years ago because he didn't do a good job. I have nothing against him. I don't care about him. I didn't know him well. But I fired him because he didn't do a good job. He wrote a phony book and you're putting it in. He's a disgruntled employee and I can understand him being disgruntled. That's okay. But the

*Washington Post* shouldn't even be covering a book like this because it was a failed book and it's all a pack of lies, and so it's one of those things.

Now, you're asking me now to take more time to call all these people so they can speak to you. You're going to have to write what you write, okay? And then when you write it, I'll say you're full of shit. But write what you have to write.

I could track down Joe Fusco, I guess. I don't know where he works now. I really don't. But I think he's a high quality, wonderful guy. I don't want to waste the time.

Michael Kranish: Okay. I'm just trying to follow up. And Hope Hicks said I should ask, at least try. She's not part of this conversation, but --

Donald Trump: At least I'm giving you a story. I mean, you can believe it, but you don't have to believe it. He was third-rate and I get rid of him. Period.

Michael Kranish: All right. I look forward to talking to you about other topics. I understand that you've got to run and I look forward to hopefully talking to you.

Donald Trump: I think you understand. I've devoted a lot of time. I hate to devote a lot of time to a guy like that because the guy is -- I mean he's a pure stone cold loser.

Okay, you take care. Let me know about your next topic. Make it a more pleasant one please.

Michael Kranish: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Trump.

Donald Trump: Thank you very much.

Michael Kranish: Thank you. Bye.